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NOTES AND NEWS

HENRI POINCARÉ

ON July 17, the death of Henri Poincaré deprived the world of, perhaps, its foremost genius. In the address delivered at his funeral, *Nature* quotes M. Guist'hau, Minister of Public Instruction, as saying of him:

"His powerful spirit came into touch with every problem and threw fresh light upon each. He was one of those rare figures in the history of mankind who, by bringing together fragmentary or isolated facts, ideas, or observations, can raise themselves to a conception of the universe, can study its constitution and evolution, and can fathom even its variations. With the help of this force of investigation, which extended to everything, he studied the laws of the intellectual, as well as of the physical world, and philosophers, mathematicians, and astronomers, recognized in him their master."

The breadth of his interests can best be shown by quoting from the speech of M. Frederic Masson, on the occasion of M. Poincaré's election to the Académie Française, in 1909:

"M. Poincaré is a very vast mind. He is remarkable for both the diversity and the profundity of his learning. He is a geometer as well as a physicist and astronomer, pursuing these sciences rather by the application to them of analytical methods than by simple observation and experimentation. His interests, thus, have been largely in the fields of mathematical physics and celestial mechanics.

"As a geometer, his works concerning the theory of numbers, integral calculus, and the general theory of functions may be found in more than one hundred and fifty communications published in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Science* and in as many articles published in mathematical journals of France and other countries.

"While professor of mathematical physics, at the University of Paris, he published fourteen volumes of lectures on light, electricity, thermodynamics, and the propagation of heat. He popularized in France, while perfecting them, Maxwell's theories which were later proved by the experiments of the great German physicist, Herz.

"In the field of astronomy, Poincaré showed great originality, and his studies upon the form taken by a fluid mass in rotation and subjected to the laws of universal gravity led to the formulation of many interesting and important theories regarding the separation of the earth and the moon, and the formation of the variable stars. By revising the calculus of LaPlace he was able through further investigation to establish the theory formulated in 1784 concerning the stability of the solar system."

Furthermore, the volumes that bring together certain prefaces to scientific works and articles published in reviews present M. Poincaré as a philosopher of no mean order. The analyses of scientific concepts, found in "Science and Hypothesis," which form the basis of the work, are reconsidered in the light of their relation to reality, in the "Nature of Science," and there established in a noteworthy contribution to the problem of the nature of knowledge.

Certain extracts from a third work, not yet translated into English, "Science et Méthode" will show both the psychology of the investigator and the motivation of his life.

"The scientist does not study nature because to do so is useful; he studies it because he takes pleasure in it, and he takes pleasure in it because it is beautiful. If nature were not beautiful, it would not be worth knowing, and life would not be worth living." "It is the search for the special beauty, the sense of harmony of the world, that makes us choose facts most suited to contribute to this harmony, as an artist chooses, among the features of his model, those which complete the portrait and give it character and life." "And it is because simplicity, because grandeur is beautiful, that we investigate by preference simple facts and great facts, that we take pleasure now in following the gigantic course of the stars, now in scrutinizing with the microscope that prodigious littleness, which is also a grandeur, and now, in seeking through geological time the hour of a past which draws us because it is remote." "But this disinterested investigation of truth for its peculiar beauty is also healthy and can make man better."

DOCTOR EDWIN D. STARBUCK, professor of philosophy in the State University of Iowa, has been granted sabbatical leave for the coming year, and will reside in Boston. He will act for the year as psychologist adviser to *The Beacon Press* in the publication of children's and young people's literature, and especially in the formation of the graded Sunday School curriculum. His address will be 25 Beacon St.

DR. WILLIAM PEPPER, professor of clinical pathology at the University of Pennsylvania, has been appointed dean of the medical department, to succeed Dr. Allen J. Smith. Dr. Smith will remain professor of pathology, comparative pathology, and tropical medicine.

DR. L. R. GEISSLER (Cornell) has resigned his position as research psychologist in the physical laboratory of the National Electric Lamp Association, Cleveland, to become professor of psychology at the University of Georgia.

IN the last issue of this JOURNAL, Dr. Walter F. Dearborn was referred to as professor in the school of education at Chicago. He should have been referred to as associate professor.